DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 316 020 FL 018 301

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TITLE Elementary Global Education in Practice.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Course Content; *Cross Cultural Studies; *Cultural Education; Curriculum Design; *Curriculum Development; Educational Objectives; Elementary Education; French; *Global Approach; Interdisciplinary Approach; Introductory Courses; *North American Culture; Program Descriptions; Second Language Instruction; *Western Civilization

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of an elementary school program in global culture which uses language as a vehicle for education in global citizenship. The approach to curriculum development focuses primarily on the child's needs, and secondarily on content. The curriculum was designed to be activity-oriented, child-centered, and multi-disciplinary. The objectives of the cultural component of the program were to develop understanding and respect for past and present customs of different nations, for American culture through reference to its component cultures, and for the nature of intercultural exchange. The language segment prepared for upper school language instruction in French by relating the lives and language of elementary school students to the lives and language of the people of France. Once goals and basic content area were defined, individual lesson plans were developed. Challenges encountered in implementing the lesson plans and techniques and activities used in planning, and in the classroom, are discussed briefly. (MSE)

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ELEMENTARY GLOBAL EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

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In recent years there has been a significant increase in interest in language studies because of the demographic changes inside the U.S. and also because of the need to be increasingly competitive as global markets open up. When I came to the U.S. eleven years ago, via England, Belgium and Spain, I too wanted to play a part in increasing inter-cultural understanding. I therefore refocussed ten years of elementary teaching by taking an additional degree in French. I anticipated using language teaching as a vehicle for education in global citizenship. With this goal before me, I taught in community college, high and middle schools and even took part in some inner city curriculum writing. At every juncture, however, I found curriculums overloaded with grammar, leaving no room for culture. In addition, the adolescent mind was so resistant to anything foreign that I began to seriously doubt my potential for success. Disheartened, I accepted a part time job in an elementary school. And then it happened! By accident I had chanced upon the solution to my problem. I discovered that the proper place to launch my global message was in the elementary school. It is at this stage, when minds are open and prejudices only minimal, that we have the greatest opportunity to develop healthy global attitudes.

I learned that language and culture had an enthusiastic elementary market as soon as I introduced a Latin language Roman culture sequence to a third grade class. The dynamic and unexpected response which followed so many frustrations and disappointments in the upper grades encouraged me to write a 1-5 sequence. Over a period of two years I innovated a new program, gained a $13,000 grant

from the Buhl foundation and am developing a circuit of speaking and workshop engagements. This essay describes the various thought processes and planning of the overall program content, methodology and individual lessons.

The foundation of the success of the program rests upon having thought first about the children and only later about the content. That is to say, I planned as an educator in the widest sense rather that as a language specialist. I initially focussed on identifying key factors in how the elementary child learns. Reflecting on my ten years' elementary teaching in England, I noted that the young child learns best through play and by having material presented holistically in relation to his/her own world. Thus I knew that my program needed to be activity-oriented, child-centered and multi-disciplinary.

With this approach in mind, I then started to plan the content, starting with culture. As a language specialist I knew the cultural aspects of the program would require the most work for me personally. On the other hand, as an elementary specialist working in a monolingual community, I knew that the children's receptiveness to ongoing language studies would need the support of quality cultural content. I have observed that once the initial novelty has worn off, young children do not maintain enthusiasm for the abstraction of language. It is by exciting the children about another culture that we can maintain their interest in foreign language. This, unfortunately, is a very bitter pill for many linguists to swallow. This argument does not, ofcourse, deny either the success or appropriateness of intensive FLES or immersion courses in

bilingual communities. Where the local life style can provide both a living example of the usefulness of another language aswell as a pool of genuinely bilingual teachers, the need to offer a cultural rationale is rduced. Since my school offers traditional Latin and French from grade 6 onwards, I started my planning from this immutable point. My program supports rather than supplants or duplicates what comes later. I aim to educate my students about the global context of their own American world, thereby creating a logical rationale for the learning of foreign languages. These are my overall cultural goals.

1. To develop an understanding and respect for the past and present customs of different nations.
2. To develop a better understanding of our own American culture through reference to component cultures.
3. To develop an understanding of the nature of intercultural exchange and evolvement.

While working out the specific content it became clear that in order for the elementary child to better understand the global roots of his American culture he needs to study the development of Western Civilisation. Debates at such esteemed institutions as Stanford have concluded that provided we enlarge our presentation of this traditional area to include reference and credit to such groups as women, Blacks and Jews it remains an essential component to teaching an understanding of America. Thus I decided to devote one year's cultural studies to Greek civilisation and the subsequent one to Roman culture. Logically, medieval culture followed. Since French is our upper school foreign language, special emphasis was placed on

things French. Beyond this I saw a need to address the pluralism in today's America more directly and, therefore, decided to devote a further year to a variety of non-Western cultures represented in our student body. Here is our grade 1-5 cultural sequence.

1. Mexico, Africa, China, Japan, India, our Classroom.
2. Ancient Greece.
3. Ancient Rome.
4. Medieval times with French emphasis(upto 1789)
5. France from 1789 to today.

Since the majority of the upper school modern language studies deal only with modern French culture, the above elementary preparation prepares for upper school material by relating the students lives to France.

Having formulated this essential cultural core for my program, I then established the following goals for the language component.

1. To enable students to speak simply but without inhibition in a foreign language.
2. To provide a logical linguistic context for the traditional study of French and Latin.
3. To enrich the students' English vocabulary.
4. To provide an understanding of the development of the English language.
5. To establish a limited oral vocabulary in French and Latin.
6. To understand some basic grammatical concepts common to both French and Latin.

If elementary language programs are to offer meaningful education it is vital that their goals support, but do not duplicate,

upper school classes. This is as true for the language content as it is for culture. From the very start I decided that it was inapproprite to teach more than essential rudiments of grammar in my elementary classes. Quite apart from the pointlessness of teaching areas which will be retaught later is the incongruity of expecting students to manipulate in a foreign language principles they cannot grasp in their own. As a result of this decision, my next challenge was to find a way to offer linguistic progression through five grades without the inclusion of extensive grammar. The solution to this apparently thorny problem was suggested by the multi-cultural format of the program. I decided to let the language develop hand in hand with the culture.

Thus, in the first grade, where we study six cultural areas, students learn simple greetings and counting in the target languages, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Hindi. In second grade, Ancient Greek culture is accompanied by modern Greek greetings and Ancient Greek numbers. This allows students to say something intelligible to a real live Greek as well as to have a basis for the comparative language studies using numbers in later grades. In the third grade, students' language learning is extended further by Latin greetings and numbers, vocabulary for the family, colors and classroom objects. In the fourth grade, we start building a basis for future French studies. Greetings and numbers are augmented by conversational phrases and larger ammounts of vocabulary. These areas continue to be extended more intensively through fifth grade. It is only at this stage that any attempt is made to present grammar. Basic concepts such as singularity, plurality, gender, the

article, the agreement of adjectives and word placement are introduced in order to ease the transition to traditional studies in sixth grade. All concepts are presented in simultaneous relationship to both Latin and French. In addition, activities in comparitive language culminate studies on the development of our English alphabet and language, an ongoing emphasis in the cultural section of the program. My students' visible enthusiasm leaves me in no doubt that studying the language and culture connection prior to the beginning of traditional language classes increases motivation for facing the rigors of upper school grammar. By understanding the interrelationship of modern languages and cultures, students learn that they are vitally connected to peoples outside America. As a result, further language and culture study is understood to be intrinsically important to their lives.

Once the goals and basic content area were mapped out, I began to work on individual lesson plans. I devised the following sandwich format which splits the language learning into two segements with culture forming the central part of each lesson.

Basic Content.	Objective.	Activity.
LANGUAGE	Revision	Game
	Introduce new material	Teacher presentation
	Record new material	Students write
	Practice new material	Oral activity
CULTURE	Revision	Team game
	Introduce new material	Teacher presentation

	Extend new material	Drama/model/freize
LANGUAGE	Reinforce new material	Game
	Revision	Group activity
		Songs and music

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Since I see my students for one 40 minute lesson per week in grades 1-3, and for two 40 minute periods grades 4 and five, splitting each lessons' language content into two segments was a successful way of teaching a large ammount of language without incurring saturation or boredom. This format, however, works equally well with shorter lessons since the television age child seems to be developing an ever shorter attention span. The above chart also indicates a suitable sequence of activities within the sandwich format. It is worth noting that this triple format permits the presentation of new material in both language and culture at the beginning of the lesson when students are at their most receptive. Similarly, reinforcement or revision activities are reserved for the time when students need most stimulus.

Implementing the language content within this format was easy. I simply wrote out a complete list of the year's language content for each grade. I then progressed through this, using a variety of activities and games, at whatever rate seemed appropriate for each group of students.

However, implementing the cultural component was more challenging, and required me to extend not only my own personal knowledge but also my teaching methods. Since the cultural content was to provide a logic for the language learning it was imperative

that I connect the children's lives with this part of the lesson to provide the necessary bridge. I selected a series of events which illustrated the basic cultural concepts of exchange and evolvement. Each event was to be selfcontained and would be presented in its entirety in the weekly lesson. I then planned a child-centered fun activity which would lead the children into unconsciously absorbing the concepts while playing.

Therefore, when I teach the concept of cutural evolvement and exchange through French architecture, we start by standing on the school steps looking at a neighbouring Gothic style church. Next, we return to class and hear an illustrated story about the building of a cathedral. We then absorb the knowledge by building a model of a Gothic church, making stained glass windows or by creating a photo essay of Gothic Pittsburgh. Most of the detailed information will be given in conjunction with instructions about the project rather than in the introduction. Elementary children absorb relatively little while one is lecturing, but retain an astounding amount of information if they are actively involved. Therefore, the lesson which traces the development of our English alphabet will also use an activity to deliver its message. The lesson starts with students of Mediterranean origin putting their hands on a map to identify their family's country. Next, the students convert the classroom into the Mediterranean sea. Each child is given a huge label assigning him/her to a particular country. He/she then sites himself/herself accordingly. This completed, the students reenact the progress of the alphabet while I tell the story. Thus we have Egyption scribes, Canaanite slaves, Phoenician traders, Greek teachers, Roman and

Etruscan warriors etc. This ability to convert factual material into an exciting story is an essential tool of the elementary teacher. In areas where it is difficult or too time-consuming to find a project, I simply tell a story twice. The first time the students listen, the second time they mime their assigned parts.

Using the above methods, a very complex topic is easily taught in an age appropriate way with very little formal teaching. In addition, once student interest has been stimulated by the activity, receptiveness to added information is increased. That is to say, by reversing the traditional high school order of presenting all the material first and the activity, if any, at the end, it is possible to teach a much larger volume of material. The higher order thinking skills are readily utilized in question and answer sessions which flow easily from an exciting project. The key to this enjoyable and efficient type of lesson plan is to find appropriate activities through which to inject one's information.

Practically speaking, the simplest methods proved to be the most successful in focussing on appropriate activities to form the core of each lesson. For each cultural segment, that is to say for each lesson, I have a folder into which I put my own notes together with any drawings, articles, activity cards etc. The first time I gave each lesson, I simply reviewed all material and then planned any activity which came to mind as simple and fun which would lead into the concepts I wanted to teach. As time has gone by I have become more skilled at selecting activities which permit the maximum amount of learning in themselves. Thus I now use successive lesson folders

as simply as another teacher might use a text. This uncomplicated method of recording lessons allows for constant addition and revision. Because language information is stored similarly, I will easily be able to hand on my entire program to a successor. Since global education is a relatively new focus in American education it is vital that those of us developing the field leave adequate materials for our work to be continued.

In recent years there has been a tremendous upsurge of interest in elementary language education. This trend is largely motivated by fear that America will not be able to compete in the global commercial world of the future. It is an appropriate concern for a country of such widespread global ignorance. The danger for us as language teachers, however, is that we fail to take these underlying goals into account in our teaching. Government departments encouraging and funding language programs do not see language as an end in itself, and neither should we. Language should be viewed as a tool in a broader educational spectrum leading to global citizenship. It is vital, therefore, that if our programs are to prosper, that we focus more clearly on the goals of those who ultimately fund them. As someone educated in a school system where all students studied at least one foreign language for seven years I know that language studies alone may, but also may not, lead to improved global functioning. To funtion globally one needs to have understanding of other peoples. Language studies should therefore always be combined with an accompanying cultural component. This is nowhere more true than at the elementary level where, because of the nature of the young child, language on its own quickly becomes a pointless abstraction.

If the community does not provide a living example of the need for foreign language, then the language teacher must fulfill that role. The time to do this is before students are faced with the rigors of upper school grammar, not in Fourth Year French when only "the converted" are left. The success of our upper school programs is dependent upon the education, in and outside school, which precedes it. Therefore, as language teachers, we need to apply maximum efforts to providing a quality basis in the elementary school. By developing a process through which young children enjoy the learning of language and cultures, we are establishing a necessary foundation for all future global education.